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Kennedy Tragedy Story

Garrison View Said 'Paranoid'

By JACK WARDLAW

District Attorney Jim Garrison took "a paranoid view of history" in constructing his theory on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, a Tulane University history professor asserted today.

Prof. Bennett H. Wall delivered a paper entitled "The Garrison Investigation: Who Killed John F. Kennedy?" before the annual meeting of the Louisiana Historical Association at the Fairmont Roosevelt Hotel.

Though Wall never specifically answers the question posed in his title, he clearly does not share Garrison's view that the President was slain as a result of a New Orleans-based conspiracy. In the 23-page paper, Wall consistently heaps scorn on the DA's case.

The professor also is critical of the Warren Commission, the Kennedy family, Garrison's witnesses, the Secret Service, the FBI, the Dallas police department and the legal system that permitted the conspiracy case against Clay L. Shaw to come to trial.

THE CONSPIRACY thesis, says Wall, stems from "a national syndrome about political murder." He suggests this stems from the myths and folklore surrounding a fallen hero.

"Leaders who are martyred become mythologized. The demands of a grieving populace destroy all reality and the illusions take over . . . In my personal opinion, it was the myth and not the reality that led to the famous Shaw trial in New Orleans," said Wall.

Wall recounted the events of the assassination in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963, and the subsequent Warren Commission investigation and asserts:

"When Kennedy was killed most Americans absolutely refused to believe he could have been killed by a paranoid loner. The official explanation advanced in the Warren Commission report simply was not accepted. But that verdict—the reluctance to accept the Warren Report—was being shaped long before the report was formally issued."

He traces William Manchester's lengthy research on Kennedy and describes the author as a victim of "the sensitive and imperious Kennedys, especially Jackie." He describes Robert F. Kennedy as Jackie's "hatchet man or errand boy" in the affair. (The Kennedy family attempted to suppress Manchester's book, "The Death of a President.")

THE PEOPLE of New Orleans, says Wall, love fantasy. "Certainly, New Orleans is one of the few places in the United States where a three-year-plus legal circus could be held." He says the loudest skeptics of the Warren Report were European Communists and New Orleans right-wingers.

Wall traces the beginnings of the Garrison investigation, and says of his Shaw trial witnesses:

"Nor was such a lineup of witnesses as those he dug up ever used in even a cheap detective story. If there is a credible witness in the lot, I fail to see one."

He brings up one nearly-forgotten circumstance—the contribution by Gov. John J. McKeithen of $5,000 from state funds for the Garrison probe. "I have yet seen in print no accounting of these latter 'public' funds."

Wall cites the odd assortment of helpers who came in to join Garrison, including Mark Lane, Edward Jay Epstein, Barbara Garson, and Mart Sahl. They were called, says Wall, the "Dealey Plaza Irregulars" for the "Baker Street Irregulars" of Sherlock Holmes. "No one has yet compared Garrison to Holmes," says Wall.

WALL ASSERTS that Garrison chose the beginning date of the Shaw trial — Jan. 21, 1969 — because it was the day President Nixon took office. Garrison, says Wall, feared retiring President Lyndon B. Johnson would intervene.

The very act of assassination, Wall holds, "provides fuel for the tranference of men into folk heroes." The Warren Report, he says, was disbelieved even though the evidence pointed to Lee Harvey Oswald as the killer for a number of reasons:

The controversial figure of Chief Justice Earl Warren; gaps in information in testimony; failure to criticize the Secret Service, the FBI and the Dallas police.

The report, he says, is "solid on the big points, but weak on peripheral matters."

The professor brings out no new material, except perhaps the assertion that Shaw's attorneys worked without fee, though they spent a quarter of a million dollars in investigative expenses.

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Prison Bans Ray's Brother

Petros, Tenn.

Brushy Mountain State Prison officials have banned the brother of James Earl Ray from the institution for six months for allegedly smuggling a letter out of the prison.

Warden Robert Moore said Sunday that Jerry Ray took a letter from his brother out of the prison and mailed it to the Knoxville News-Sentinel.

Associated Press